

A
LETTER

From a Gentleman of the *Isle of Ely* in *Cambridgeshire*,

TO

Colonel Roderick Mansel,

Containing an Account of the First Discovery of the

Pretended Presbyterian Plot

*At the Assizes at Wisbich in the Isle of Ely,
upon the 23 Day of September 1679.*

S I R,



Have read your Narrative of the pretended Presbyterian Plot: At the first I was infinitely surprized at the Audaciousness of the Undertaking: But when I considered that Hell and *Rome* had combined together for the Extirpation not only of Protestantism, but Morality, and that they would leave no Stone unturn'd to effect these Execrable Designs, though they waded through Treasons and Murders to accomplish them; and that they had found after the Dissolution of Two Parliaments, *Flagrante Conspirations*, and the several Prorogations of a Third, that English-men were resolved to be Protestants, and that no sinister means could pervert those honest Gentlemen Elected into Parliament by the sweat and labour of the Industrious Freeholders, but that they would adhere to Truth, and the Protestant Religion, in despite of all the Terroures of Popery, and its Adherents, then was it that these Conspirators thought they must

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bestir themselves more than ordinary, or else the Catholick Cause, and their dearly beloved *Diana*, Arbitrary Government, must receive a total defeat; a thing too hard for them to digest, that had laid a Design for many years by-past, and which they look'd upon the last year to be brought to perfection, and only diverted by a False Brother to them, yet a True One to his Countrey: And therefore they did cast about, how at one dash they might retrieve all, and throw the whole weight of this Plot upon the Presbyterians, as they call them; but really intending by that Name all the Noblemen and Gentlemen of *England* that had either Courage or Honesty to own the Protestant Religion, and the Liberty of English-men. These, amongst others surely, were the Motives that prompted them to attempt this Horrid Villany; a thing not to be parallel'd in *Nero's* time, to hang so great a number of Gentlemen for a Plot by Subornation, who never knew one Syllable of what they were accused of: For my part, I think 'tis the Jesuites Master-piece.

But one thing, (SIR) I must tell you, and I cannot resolve whether to attribute it more to the Knavery, or the Folly of some Popishly-affected Church-men: 'Tis now some months since the Ecclesiastical Drums of my Neighbourhood, as well as of your City, have beat an Alarm of a Presbyterian Plot, and the Honest Drinking Justice believing in *Verbo Sacerdotis*, did easily swallow the Bait; and if it had not been for the stubbornness of the honest Freeholder, who is now convinced, by sad Experience that one Cheat endeavours to support another, truly we had been in some danger of being misled.

Well Sir, to shew you how far this Design hath influenced the Countrey, as well as the City, I have sent you the following Narrative of what happened with us, which will shew you, that we were Hecctored with this Plot, above a month before it was sent to your Lodging. Our Bishop hath the Power of holding Assizes within this Isle, and of appointing a Judge, and Justices of the Peace, and a Bayliff of this Liberty, who hath the power of Returning all Juries, and whatsoever else the High Sheriff executeth in the County, which Place of Bayliff is now held by Mr. *Wren*, Son to our late Bishop. And the Assizes being holden at *Wisbich* upon the 23^d. of September past, there came thither from *London* one Mr. *Perne*, Minister of *Crowland*, a Living as they say of 4 or 500*l*. a year in *Lincolnshire*, and brought News that the Plot was now discovered to be a Presbyterian Plot, & reported a great number of the Protestant Peers, and Gentlemen, that had eminently and undauntedly asserted our Religion and Liberties to be engagad therein, many whereof he named, and that with such confidence, that it had entire credit with some staggering Protestants, who did not a little insult at the News, and amongst others, one Mr. *Scotrell*, a Gentleman of the Grand Jury was thereby so transported, that upon *Thursday* in the Assizes, he with a glass of Wine in his hand, invited the Grand Jury to drink the *Popes* Health, and being opposed therein, did say that the *Pope* was a Worthy Person, whereupon complaint being made to the Judge in the Court, Mr. *Scotrell* boldly owned the Charge, and justified his offering to Drink the *Popes* Health, and being reproved by the Judge for so offending, at a time when there was such a damnable Popish Plot discovered and carried on; he confidently replied, My Lord, is it a Popish or a Puritan Plot; this unparallel'd confidence created, as I conceive

ceive, a suspicion with the Judge, that there might be disguised Papists on the Grand Jury, and thereupon he put them to take the Oaths of Allegiance and supremacy in the Court. Afterwards, in that Evening Mr. *Scotrell* being in company with several Gentlemen, did again set on foot the Drinking the *Popes* Health. Upon the next day he was again charged in the Court, for drinking the *Popes* Health, and for having drank it at another time to two young Men of the Town of *Wibbich*, but he continued to justifie himself, and said, my Lord, I know not But I may drink the *Popes* Health, as well as your Lordships, whereupon the Judge enquired of the Justices of the Peace, of the Religion and Conversation of Mr. *Scotrell*, and one Mr. *F.* a Gentleman of about 160*l.* a year, accounted a Protestant, who is a Justice of the Peace in our Isle, and lately since the putting out of some Justices in *Norfolk*, made also a Justice there, did interceed with the Judge for him, and declared that there was not a known Papist in the Isle of *Ely* (but God, and I believe Mr. *Prance* know some concealed ones) however the Judge bound Mr. *Scotrell* to the good Behaviour, and acquainted the Country, that he would represent the offence to the King and Council.

It may also be worthy Observation, that one of our Justices, who is also an Officer in the Militia, did at the same Assizes in the Court affirm, that there is a Puritan Plot, and indeed those that desired a belief thereof, did so outdoo in confidence though not number, that though some few saw through the Design, they were more that dreaded the difficulty of Detecting the contrivance and Contrivers, and for my part, I tremble to think what Blood would have been shed, and what ruine brought upon our best Patriots, if others had entertained this Plot as we did; and that we are not overwhelmed by it, deserves a perpetual Commemoration, at least equal to that of our Deliverance from *Falx's* conspiracy. Now Sir with your leave, I will offer something to the consideration of true *English* Gentlemen, and of the Sober Clergy of our *English* Church; for such I hope are left with you, though here too rarely seen.

What inducement have many, and especially of the Clergy, so frequently to defame as they do the Kings Evidence, and with all their might, to dissuade from a belief of the Popish, and at the same time to endeavour, *per fas & nefas*, to prepare the People for a Belief of a Presbyterian Plot. What do your good Queen *Elizabeth* Protestants think of such Men? I assure you Sir, that to the great dishonour of Protestantism, the plain Countryman begins to call them by that harsh name of Papists, but they are numerous, therefore Heaven forbid there should be such Accession to the Conspirators: the most discerning, and most charitable in our Neighbourhood pity their blindness, and hope that some that they think acting what may bring us under the yoke of Roman Idolatry, will rather suffer Martyrdom, than take that Yoke upon themselves; and we hope that those of them that desire to live and die Protestants, and to deliver over our Religion, and Liberties to a better Generation, will now awake; seeing God hath so providentially brought to light this last Villany.

I read Sir, to my amazement in your Narrative, that that valiant Protestant Prince, the Duke of *Monmouth* (the Glory of our Nation) and the Earl of *Essex* (who I hear is Son of the brave Lord *Capel*, who died

a Martyr for our present Sovereign) and the Lord *Gerard*, who fought so gallantly for King *Charles* the Martyr, amongst many others were designed to be cut off, and that as Presbyterians 'too. I conclude they are not tame and low Spirited Men, and therefore long to know how they resent it, for methinks they should call for Reparation, so far as all the Popish Party are able to make it; but I am tedious, and therefore shall conclude assuring you, that I am your Affectionate Friend and Servant.

Nov. 28. 1679.

Multi ob stultitiam non putabant, Multi ob Ignorantiam non videbant, Multi ob pravitatem non credebant, & non credendo Conjurrationem adjuvabant.

Some were such stupid Sots, they did not think,
Some through affected Ignorance did wink;
Some were such Rascals, they believ'd it not,
And by their unbelief helpt on the Plot.

F I N I S.
